

Nagarjuna says in his **Commentary on the Mind of Enlightenment**:

*Suchness is not observed to be a  
Different [entity] from the conventional.  
The conventional is taught to be emptiness;  
Emptiness itself is the conventional;  
One does not occur without the other,  
Just as product and impermanence.*

The first two lines explain that the conventional truth and the ultimate truth are one entity. The next two lines give two reasons for why the two truths are one entity:

- 1) all conventional truths are empty of being truly existent and
- 2) the emptiness of being truly existent is posited *on the basis of* conventional truths.

The last two lines explain that the two truths are further related in a way in which one does not exist without the other; i.e. the ultimate truth of the sprout does not exist if the conventional truth, the sprout, does not exist and the conventional truth, the sprout, does not exist if the ultimate truth of the sprout does not exist. The example that helps to illustrate this is 'product and impermanence' (which are also one entity and related in a way in which one does not exist without the other).

Panchen Sonam Drakpa, the textbook author of *Drepung Loseling* and *Ganden Shartse* Monastic Colleges, suggests that Nagarjuna is commenting on the famous passage from the **Heart Sutra**:

*Form is emptiness; emptiness is form  
Emptiness is not other than form,  
Form too is not other than emptiness*

Thus, the two truths are different phenomena but not different entities, i.e. they are not one phenomenon but one entity.

English: one / Tibetan: གཅིག -Chig

English: different / Tibetan: ཅ་དམིགས་ -Tha dae

English: one entity / Tibetan: རྩོམ་གཅིག་ -Ngo wo Chig (Ngo wo = entity/nature, chig = one)

English: different entity / Tibetan: རྩོམ་ཅ་དམིགས་ -Ngo wo Tha dae (Ngo wo = entity/nature, Tha dae = different)

The **Sutra Unraveling the Thought** cites four faults that occur if the two truths were not one entity, i.e. if the two truths were different entities.

If the two truths were not one entity:

1. The pot's emptiness of being truly existent would not be the mode of abidance (the essential nature) of the pot.
2. The mind that realizes the pot's emptiness of being truly existent would not overcome the mind that apprehends the pot being truly existent.
3. The pot would not be the basis upon which the pot being truly existent is negated
4. The mind that realizes the pot's emptiness of being truly existent and the mind that apprehends the pot existing truly would coexist in a Buddha's continuum (since a Buddha would perceive the pot being truly existent and pot's emptiness of being truly existent as unrelated)

Lama Tsongkhapa says in his **Illumination of the Thought** that if phenomena and their emptiness of being truly existent were not one entity, phenomena would have to truly exist.

Furthermore, the **Sutra Unraveling the Thought** also cites four faults that occur if the two truths were one.

If the two truths were one:

1. Direct perceivers in the continua of ordinary beings would be able to realize pot's emptiness of being truly existent.
2. Afflictions would arise in dependence on perceiving the pot's emptiness of being truly existent.
3. The pot's emptiness of being truly existent would have color and shape.
4. There would be no need for Yogis to make an effort in realizing pot's emptiness of being truly existent.

Further faults that are described in other texts are: (1) just as there is no diversity among ultimate truths, there would be no diversity among conventional truths,

(2) just as many conventional truths are afflictive, so many ultimate truths would have to be afflictive, (3) if one did not have to strive to search for the ultimate truth, the path to liberation would be beginningless.

**The reasoning that establishes that the category of the two truths is definite in number:**

As explained earlier, the category of the two truths is definite in number which means that there are not more than two truths and that the two truths cannot be condensed into less than two truths.

The ***Sutra of Father and Son's Meeting*** says:

*What is to be known too is confined to this conventional and the ultimate truth alone.*

The ***Sutra definitely Presenting Suchness*** says:

*There is the conventional and likewise the ultimate truth;*

*There is never at any time a third truth.*

Chandrakirti says in his ***Auto-Commentary [on the Supplement to the Middle Way]***:

*Likewise, whatever other minor truths there are these too one should ascertain only as belonging to either of the two truths.*

There is also a list of 'truths' explained in the ***Ten Bhumi Sutra***. However, those 'truths' are all included within the two truths.

The reasoning that establishes that the category of the two truths is definite in number: the category of the two truths is definite in number because the two truths are directly contradictory. They are directly contradictory because

- a) They are contradictory: it is impossible for a phenomenon *to be both* a conventional and an ultimate truth. Therefore, there is no common locus of the two truths because there is nothing that is both a conventional and an ultimate truth.

Please note that even though a sprout is not both a conventional truth and an ultimate truth, it *has* both a conventional and an ultimate truth. For instance, a flower is not both color and smell but it *has* both color and smell.

- b) The two truths stand in *direct* contradiction: the meaning of conventional truth is: 'deceptive'. The meaning of ultimate truth is: 'non-deceptive'. Deceptive and non-deceptive stand in direct contradiction because when a mind (a valid cognizer) explicitly realizes, for instance, that a sprout is deceptive, that same mind also implicitly realizes that the sprout is not non-deceptive. Likewise, when a mind explicitly realizes that the sprout's emptiness (of being truly existent) is non-deceptive, that same mind also implicitly realizes that the sprout's emptiness (of being truly existent) is not deceptive. Since the meanings of the two truths are directly contradictory, the two truths must also be directly contradictory. Therefore, when a mind explicitly realizes that the sprout is a conventional truth, that same mind also implicitly realizes that the sprout is not an ultimate truth. Likewise, when a mind explicitly realizes that the sprout's emptiness is an ultimate truth, that same mind also implicitly realizes that the sprout's emptiness is not a conventional truth.

Kamalashila says in his ***Illumination of the Middle Way***:

*With respect to (a pair of) phenomena that are characterized by abiding as mutual exclusions, if **something** being one (of the pair) is negated while **it** being the other (of the pair) is not established, then **it** does not exist. Therefore it is not feasible to conceive of something that is neither of the two.*

To abide as mutual exclusions means to be directly contradictory. If something being an ultimate truth is negated while it being a conventional truth is not established, then it cannot exist. When, for instance, the horns of a rabbit being an ultimate truth is negated, the horns of a rabbit being a conventional truth is not established because the horns of a rabbit are non-existent and are thus neither a conventional truth nor an ultimate truth. However, when the sprout being an ultimate truth is negated the sprout being a conventional truth is being established. Similarly, when the sprout's emptiness being a conventional truth is negated the sprout's emptiness being an ultimate truth is established. The reason for this is that both the sprout and the sprout's emptiness exist and whatever exists must be either a conventional or an ultimate truth. It is not feasible to conceive of a phenomenon that is neither of the two.

This applies to all phenomena that are directly contradictory such as being an embodied being and not being an embodied being, being one and different, being permanent and impermanent, and so forth.

